

Mrs ISABEL McCULLOCH, D. MILNE, P. J. MOORE, C. A. MULLER, Mrs H. PRICE, Dr R. P. PRYS-JONES, Mrs LIZ THURSTON and M. THURSTON.

Dr J. J. D. Greenwood gave an address on 'The summer life of the Snow Bunting'. He described his studies of *Plectrophenax nivalis* during 3 summers spent at Mesters Vig in east Greenland (72°15'N, 24°00'W) and showed slides both of birds there and the habitat.

Significant range extension for *Nectarinia reichenbachii* in West Africa

by W. Parker Cane & Michael F. Carter

Received 25 June 1987

Reichenbach's Sunbird *Nectarinia reichenbachii* is endemic to western Africa, being found regularly along the coast of Gabon and Cameroon where it commonly feeds on the flowers of coconut palms (Chapin 1954). It has often been placed in a separate genus, *Anabathmus* (Bates 1930, Bannerman 1948, Mackworth-Praed & Grant 1973), along with certain nectarinids endemic to the Gulf of Guinea islands, the Principe Sunbird *N. hartlaubii* (Principe Island) and *N. newtonii* of Sao Tome. This group is considered by Hall & Moreau (1970) to form a superspecies comprised of "divergent members" of the *N. verticalis* (Olive-backed Sunbird) group.

To the east, *N. reichenbachii* is found with decreasing frequency as far as the Uele and Kivu districts of NE Zaire, while the western limit of its range was heretofore the Volta River in Ghana (Mackworth-Praed & Grant 1973: 565, Serle *et al.* 1977).

We wish to report a first record for *Nectarina reichenbachii* in Liberia, which represents a range extension westward by c. 1000 km. The bird (AMNH 817779) was collected by MFC on 15 September 1985 at the Poor River Lagoon at New Kru Town, near Greenville, Sinoe County, Liberia (5°02'N, 9°05'W) in a mist net set between mangroves interspersed with a few thorny shrubs. The site was within 25 m of a large Coconut palm plantation and within 50 m of the ocean.

While recent sight records have been reported in the region near Abidjan, Ivory Coast (Demey 1986), to our knowledge the furthest west *N. reichenbachii* has previously been collected was in the Volta River region of Ghana. Further, Bannerman (1948) noted that since the collection of a specimen near the Volta River c. 1870 no one had obtained this sunbird from west of Lagos. During the 20 years 1963–1982 that the Nimba Research laboratory operated in the Mount Nimba region of Liberia, no specimen of *N. reichenbachii* was recorded (Colston & Curry-Lindahl 1986). This is not particularly surprising since most of the work of the unit was carried out at higher elevations in the interior region of Liberia, whereas Reichenbach's Sunbird is most commonly found in localities near the sea. Since the coastal areas of Liberia have been relatively poorly explored ornithologically it is possible that this species has been overlooked in the past. However, *reichenbachii* favours open places such as gardens and abandoned farmland (Serle *et al.* 1977), and

this record may be another example of a species which favours second growth habitat extending its range into previously undisturbed areas as forest clearing occurs.

Description of specimen (colour code reference is Smithe 1975)

Wing (chord) 54 mm, tail 42 (somewhat worn), culmen from nostril 13.7, exposed culmen 16.7, tarsus 17 mm. Chin and throat pale olive-yellow (52) which extends irregularly along sides of upper breast; some feathers on upper breast are all or partly the glossy blue-black (90) typical of the adult plumage. The pectoral tufts are spectrum yellow (55). The abdomen is generally olive grey (42) with undertail coverts olive-yellow (52), this colour extending along the midline of the abdomen. Dorsally the bird is generally olive-green (46) with most of the crown feathers showing some glossy blue-black. The centres of the mantle feathers are dark (some showing faint barring) with olive-green edges. There is a general lightening of the dorsal plumage posteriorly, the rump feathers being olive-yellow. The uppersides of the rectrices, which are strongly graduated, are sepia (219) with the undersides of the outer 4 pairs having greyish-white tips. When collected, the soft parts were recorded as iris black, feet and legs black, the weight as 9.8 gms.

The plumage of the Liberian bird is similar to that of another specimen in the AMNH series (AMNH 690373) collected by Ansorge in June 1907 near Lake Ogemwe in Gabon. Bannerman (1948) describes 6 plumage stages for *N. reichenbachii*. The Liberian specimen agrees well with his fifth stage, indicating a bird nearing fully adult plumage. *N. reichenbachii* does not have the dull eclipse plumage found in some sunbirds (Delacour 1944). The bird was sexed as male with testes not enlarged. All the above characters are in agreement with a diagnosis of an immature male Reichenbach's Sunbird.

The presence of an immature *N. reichenbachii* in Liberia in mid-September is consistent with our current knowledge of the breeding season for this species, which has been recorded in the Cameroon region in June (Chapin 1954: 217-8, Serle 1981) as well as from September to December (Serle 1981). In Liberia, for other nectarinids the Nimba laboratory recorded breeding most frequently in the May/June period (Colston & Curry-Lindahl 1986).

A note on the plumages of N. reichenbachii

A feature considered unique to the '*Anabathmus*' group is the presence of yellow pectoral tufts in both the male and female. Mackworth-Praed & Grant (1973) indicate that the tufts in the female Reichenbach's Sunbird are generally paler yellow. Hall & Moreau (1970) indicate that in the male the tufts are orange-yellow. In the AMNH series of 12 adult males and 8 adult females the coloration of pectoral tufts is spectrum yellow (55) in both sexes, although in the females these feathers are somewhat paler. There is, however, variability in this character in the males, reaching an extreme in an adult male from Bata in Equatorial Guinea (AMNH 800642) in which the pectoral tufts are bright orange-yellow (18). It is unlikely that this specimen from the centre of the range of the species represents a distinct race but the colour difference is quite strong.

In immature specimens of *reichenbachii*, such as the Liberian example, yellow feathers predominate on the throat and upper breast. Scattered among these are found glossy, blue-black feathers typical of the adult plumage, some completely in sheath as would be expected if the bird were undergoing its first prebasic moult. However, yellow feathers typical of the immature plumage are also found which contain varying amounts of the glossy blue-black pigmentation, presumably reflecting the irregularity of the physiology causing the transition to the adult plumage.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Alexander L. Peal, the Head of the Wildlife & National Parks Service of the Republic of Liberia's Forestry Development Authority for his cooperation and assistance during the course of this work. We are also indebted to Stuart Keith for his advice and helpful comments on the manuscript.

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The validity of *Kupeornis* Serle

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Received 15 July 1987

According to Hall & Moreau (1970) the genus *Lioptilus* comprises 4 species. The type species is the Bush Blackcap *L. nigricapillus*, originally described in 1818 as *Turdus nigricapillus* Vieillot. It occurs in south-eastern Africa from Eastern Cape to Swaziland, where it inhabits montane forest and adjacent scrubby hillsides of the evergreen mistbelt (Maclean 1985). Following Sclater (1930) the name *Lioptilus* is pre-occupied and *Lioptilornis* Oberholzer, should be preferred. *Lioptilus* has,